

Follow-up Review of Project Management Arrangements – Conwy County Borough Council

Audit year: 2022-23

Date issued: January 2023

Document reference: 3288A2022

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Summary report

Summary

What we reviewed and why

- 1 The review is a follow-up to a piece of audit work completed in 2020. We undertook the 2020 review to gain assurance that the Council had improved its project management arrangements and acted to address recommendations made in an independent report on the Council's Mochdre Commerce Park project (presented to the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 March 2019). We said in our 2020 report, 'The Council has clearly defined and is improving project management arrangements, but the absence of project management for the property at the Mochdre Commerce Park was the root cause of the problems which occurred.' Consequently, we made one proposal for improvement:
 - the Council must ensure it uses the CAMMS system to record and manage all projects that fall within the remit of the Council's Programme and Project Management Framework.
- 2 This review is a follow-up review on that one proposal for improvement.
- 3 We undertook the review during the period August 2022 to October 2022.
- 4 We reviewed Conwy County Borough Council's (the Council) project management arrangements. We looked at how the Council records and manages projects within its Programme and Project Management Framework¹ (the Framework). We had a particular focus on whether the Council was using its CAMMS² system to manage all projects. We reviewed three projects from the Council's portfolio. We took a sample of three projects at various stages in the project lifecycle, rather than reviewing all of the projects the Council is currently managing.

¹ The Council's Cabinet approved a Corporate Project Management Framework in 2007. This developed into the current Programme and Project Management Framework in 2011. The Framework provides a generic, scalable, structured approach to delivering programmes and projects, with roles, responsibilities and governance arrangements clearly set out. The Framework is based on the 'Projects in a Controlled Environment' (PRINCE 2) and the 'Managing Successful Programmes' (MSP) methodologies and reflects best practice in project and programme management.

² In 2015, the Council procured a project and programme management system called CAMMS. It is a software system that incorporates performance, risk, audit, and hazard management. It enables people to manage programmes and projects via a system of workflows. The Council has worked with the supplier to tailor the software to support the Framework and deliver a consistent approach to managing projects.

What we found

- 5 Our review sought to answer the question: 'Does the Council manage and record all projects that fall within the remit of the Council's Programme and Project Management Framework in CAMMS?'
- 6 Overall, we found that: The Council uses CAMMS to record and manage all of its programmes and significant projects. We reached this conclusion because:
- all Council officers now use the CAMMS for all significant projects;
 - the Council used the CAMMS to manage the three projects we reviewed, but there are minor opportunities to further enhance the arrangements; and
 - as part of its programme and project management arrangements, the Council actively considers the Sustainable Development Principle.

Recommendation

Exhibit 1: recommendation

The table below sets out the recommendation that we have identified following this review.

Recommendations

Guidance on CAMMS reports

- R1 The Council to provide guidance to project managers on timeframes for issuing mandatory reports within CAMMS.

Detailed report

The Council uses CAMMS to record and manage all of its programmes and significant projects

All Council officers now use the CAMMS software for all significant projects

7 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- all three projects we reviewed had used or were using CAMMS to record and manage delivery.
- the Framework explains which projects should use the CAMMS. The Framework defines five scales of projects, and projects in the four largest-scale categories must use CAMMS. The smallest-scale projects ('Tasks' where costs are within the 'business as usual' budget) do not have to use the system as they represent a relatively low risk to the Council.
- CAMMS produces a standard suite of reports that officers told us enabled them to manage projects effectively. A Project Board will expect to see this suite of reports in all project meetings. Officers told us that by following the CAMMS system they would be adhering the Framework and achieving the high project management standards expected by the 'Prince 2' and 'Managing Successful Projects' methodologies.
- the Council's central support team for project management monitors projects to ensure all relevant projects are using CAMMS. The team will follow up with projects it does not see on the register to help the project team use CAMMS.
- the Council has developed a mechanism to ensure the Environment, Roads, and Facilities (ERF) Service manages all of its projects through CAMMS. It has created four generic programmes within CAMMS to provide effective project management and governance arrangements.
- both the Framework and the project management training provided by the Council clearly explain the use of CAMMS. The Council had strengthened its project management training since our 2020 work by creating the 'Project Management Revisited' course.
- the Council has a well-developed Management of Projects and Programmes Forum. The Forum updates officers on the CAMMS software, shares good practice, discusses lessons learned, provides training, and collects feedback.

The Council used the CAMMS system to manage the three projects we reviewed, but there are minor opportunities to further enhance the arrangements

8 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- the Caerhun and Trefriw Primary School project used CAMMS to record and manage its project arrangements. However, the Council has not issued a Closure Report.
 - the contractors finished the project and handed the school back to the Education Service in September 2019. The school is currently operational with pupils on site.
 - the Project Team had produced a Lessons Learnt Report through CAMMS but has not issued a Closure Report.
 - the Framework states that a Closure Report (End Project Report) is mandatory for a project of this scale. However, the Framework does not give a time limit for producing such a report.
 - the Project Team has not issued a Closure Report as there is an outstanding issue with drainage. The Council is retaining a sum of money from the contractors until they have rectified the issue.
 - the Project Manager has issued verbal updates to the Project Board in place of presenting a Closure Report.
- the regeneration of the Brickworks programme used CAMMS to set up its initial arrangements, such as the Programme Definition Document.
 - we have not seen any Highlight Reports from CAMMS for this programme.
 - the Framework states that a Highlight Report is mandatory for projects of the scale of those involved in the Brickworks Programme.
 - the Brickworks was a collection of 'business as usual' tasks which escalated into three projects and was subsequently approved as a programme at the end of 2020.
 - the programme is in its infancy and the three constituent projects are about to enter the delivery stage. The Council informed us it will produce Highlight Reports once it has made detailed decisions about the site.
- the Abergele Eastern Development Project used CAMMS to set up its initial arrangements, including a Project Brief and a Programme Definition Document.
 - the last project meeting was in February 2022.
 - the Council has paused the project while it waits to resolve a site access issue with a third-party. The Project Team recorded the pausing of the project in the Project Board meeting minutes.

As part of its programme and project management arrangements, the Council actively considers the Sustainable Development Principle

9 In reaching this conclusion we found that:

- the Council's Programme and Project Management Framework has guidance on the Sustainable Development Principle, the Five Ways of Working, and the Seven National Well-being Goals.
- the project management documents produced through CAMMS (for example, the Project Definition Document, the Highlight Report, and the Closure Report) have sections on the Sustainable Development Principle that officers must complete.
- the Council's dedicated corporate project management team provide project management training which includes the Sustainable Development Principle.
- the CAMMS project management documents clearly outline how a project integrates with other existing strategies and plans. They also provide a vision for each project representing how the future will look (the 'to be' picture).
- the Council has developed a sustainability tool for project managers to assess the sustainability score for their project.



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